Histamine, Mast Cells, and Chinese Medicine: A Root-Cause Approach to Allergies Transcript

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Introduction to Diet and Allergies

There's no perfect diet for everybody. I get asked this question all the time. Now, actually, if I had to in the dark suggest a diet or someone, I would suggest the Mediterranean diet.

It always beats out all of the other diets when they're compared in large scale studies. Some people, particularly with horrible gut problems and allergenic problems, do better on a carnivore diet, for a little while.

But overall, the diet that works the best for everybody is the Mediterranean diet. Hi and welcome to The Balancing Point. I'm Dr. John Needers and I am here to make traditional Chinese medicine, functional medicine and integrative health simple, practical and fun.

So you can restore balance, boost vitality and enjoy a healthier life every single day. Hi y'all, this is Dr. John, back here with another presentation of The Balancing Point.

And you can find these episodes on The balancing Point or at Dr Talks or any of your favorite outlets for podcasts and videos. So today's presentation, I will be doing a PowerPoint, but it will also flow nicely if you're just doing it as an auditory file.

If you're doing it as a visual, sometimes it goes a little bit slow and you might want to pick it up to one and a half times speed. That's how I watch almost everything.

So today I want talk about the combination of traditional Chinese medicine and functional medicine to calm allergic reactions.

Show Intro and Episode Overview

Here we are in springtime again and we're going to be flooded in my clinic with people coming in with tons and tons of seasonal allergies. we always get a significant number of food sensitivities and food allergies, which we're treating also.

So I'm going to talk about both of those today. And again, I am going talk it mostly from a traditional Chinese medical point of view. In another episode I'll talk more about it from functional medicine point-of-view.

Today I will be mostly TCM with a little functional. Treating allergies and foods sensitivites. So what's traditional Chinese medicine? Just to kind of kick us off, Chinese Medicine is well over 2,000 years old.

And you notice I didn't say traditional, because what is now called traditional is not. It's really post Maoist Chinese Madison, and it was made so that it fit better with Western medicine.

And so there's great value in both, in all of those systems. I was trained by several pre-Maoist doctors, and so I got that view also. Now, the oldest book on Chinese medicine and health that still exists that we can find is called the Huang Dini Jing.

And that's translated as the Yellow Emperor's Classic of Medicine. The Yellow Emperor is the famous empire that united all of China. He caused massive canals to be constructed to link the North and the South for commerce.

coins and coinage and ways to pay for goods. And so he's quite, quite famous.

What Traditional Chinese Medicine Is

So the book, the Huangdi Nejing is a conversation that Huangde, The Emperor, is having with one of the people in his court, who's a doctor, and he is asking him questions.

You're like, why do people die at 50 years old when I've heard they used to live to be over 100? And so the person he's talking to goes into great detail about how to live to be a hundred years old.

And most of these old Chinese doctors lived into a ripe old age because they followed their own advice. Kind of crazy, huh? It's extremely accurate, the Huangdi Neijing, and it's still useful for lifestyle and for treatment, for seasonal eating, or how much you should sleep at different times of year, etc.

Now, it originated in China, but China and India, you know, ideas were going back and forth and Japan slipped a few things in there. Not so much at the beginning, they were very much influenced by Chinese medicine.

Now, Chinese medicine, as we call it, or some people call its Southeast Asian medicine is the primary type of medicine that has been practiced in that area for 2000 years.

And it is still practiced today. I studied in several medical hospitals that were Chinese medical. acupuncture, etc. Huge hospitals. The largest stroke hospital in the world is in China at that hospital.

Now hold on to your seats here. They treat 10,000 stroke and neurological patients per day. 10 000 per person that ran that. Hospital for many, many years won tons of awards as the highest stroke recovery rate of any hospital in the world by the Edinburgh scale, which is comparing all forms of medicine for stroke care, was one of my teachers.

So the issue of traditional Chinese medicine is we're focusing on balance in body. It uses natural and holistic treatments. Those terms are often misunderstood.

They used animal products, they used insects, plants, etc. It treats the body, mind, spirit, and it always, always keeps in mind the environment. The main goal is to restore balance so the Body can heal itself.

I've often told patients, there is more intelligence in one cell in a human body than in all the books ever written about medicine, right? The Body knows how to heal Itself if we simply allow it to be in balance.

So that's the main goal of Chinese medicine. So if you have an overactive immune system, which often happens with allergies, we don't want to shut it off.

That exposes you to all sorts of other illnesses. If you've watched any of the commercials for a variety of skin conditions, et cetera, or colon conditions.

Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, dermatitis. Always in those ads, they'll say it can cause death. Seriously. And all sorts of other problems. Well, we want to get to the root of the problem and restore equilibrium and then the body doesn't need those strong treatments.

So some very core concepts. Qi, we talk about Qi a lot. Now I'm not going to go into detail because there are so many interpretations. If you look at a Chinese dictionary, there's a long list.

So we often think of it as vital energy or life force. can be translated as breath. So it is just critical. Without qi, you don't live. And then this idea of yin and yang, it's the balance of opposites.

By the way, they're complementary opposits that mutually engender each other. One cannot exist without the other, now you can more ying or you could be more yang.

but they must coexist. Now think the theory of relativity by Einstein, where he said E equals MC squared. So he's

saying energy equals mass times the constant of the speed of light squared, in that equation, the M or mass is the yin, it's the solid, its the material, while the E or energy is more yang.

It's this stuff that you can't really see as well. And so it is this balance of y in the solid mass and yang, the vital energy that keeps us moving and keeps alive and keep us healthy.

Now the meridians, which has many, many different translations.

Core TCM Concepts: Qi, Yin-Yang, and Meridians

Some people call them channels, some people called them meridian, but basically they're energy pathways. This is so misunderstood. These meridians, 223 out of 224 points that were dissected lie directly over nerves and generally over nerve bifurcations where nerves bificate or split off from each other.

And by treating at those points, you're affecting the neurology. Now, there are many, many other things that get affected, but that's one. We can measure those.

So we have many devices in our office to measure the energy flow, the chi flow the resistance to flow in those channels. It's palpable. If you've been trained, then you can actually feel that flow.

Catherine, who works with me and does most of the acupuncture, One of the things she will do is to analyze with her hands the chi flow in the meridians.

Now, again, the Chinese aren't the only people that discovered this. See, they didn't create it. That's what people think. They made this up. they created it, They didn' t.

It is a system. it is in every body. Many other cultures have identified those exact same energy systems and describe them. Ayurveda goes into great detail about that, The Indian systems.

The Mayans called them the rivers, I'm sorry, the wind and the channels. The Incas called him the light, The Rivers of Light. So many cultures knew this.

Utsi the Iceman, 6,000 years old, they pulled him out of the Alps. where he had been buried in the snow for 6,000 years. And he has the meridians tattooed on his body and the points that they would treat his problems were tattoo on this body.

So we're also gonna talk about organ systems and they don't always line up with Western organs, like the heart is a heart, but in Chinese medicine has many, many other known functions.

In fact, the term for heart is sheen, which means heart mind, it's both. And so a much better understanding of the interconnectedness energetically. Western medicine's coming along, they're kind of figuring it out.

They're seeing that these meridians are real. There's seeing these organ systems really do have a connection. So here's how TCM views allergies. they see it as an imbalance, not just an immune reaction.

If the body's in balance, it won't have that immune reaction. So in Western medicine, allergies are caused by the immune system overreacting to some influence, right?

It might be pollens, grasses, molds. It may be a food. In TCM, traditional Chinese medicine allergies happen when the bodies defenses are either weak or unbalanced.

Allergies are often linked to these following energetic and organ systems in Chinese medicine. Lung weakness. For example, the lung system at TCM controls breathing and immune defense.

Now, if you think about it, likely place for pathogens to attack. It is the only organ that comes into direct contact with

the environment. You're breathing things in.

And so having an immune defense in the lungs that is very, very powerful is critical. So weakness in lungs can lead to hay fever or asthma or any number of other problems.

Spleen weakness. Now spleen, there are two characters for spleen in Chinese medicine. One is the spline as we know it, the organ that holds your blood, et cetera, same as Western medicine, but splean otherwise is a functional, a function issue.

And if you look at that function, it's really the function of the small intestine and the pancreas and digestive enzymes.

How TCM Views Allergies and Food Sensitivities

And so spleen she weakness can lead to digestive dysfunction, food sensitivities, allergies, weight gain, edema, swelling, fatigue, right? Because what we say in Chinese medicine is that the spleen absorbs or draws upward the pure essence from your food.

That would be your vitamins, minerals, etc. It will then allow the turbid to flow down and that's your stool that is going to come out. And so the spleen is responsible in Chinese medicine for that function.

So if it's weak, You're going to have fatigue, you're gonna be tired. You are going gain weight, right? You can absorb that which you should not, and you won't absorb, that's what you shouldn't.

And then we look at external factors like wind and dampness. There's a saying that the wind is the leader of the hundred evils. I'll tell you, in terms of climate, I'm okay with hot, cold, rain, boy do I abhor wind.

So, you know, maybe it's the Chinese medicine in me, I don't know. But every year I get a little more and more sensitive to the wind. Now, food sensitivities in TCM, this is how I got into Chinese Medicine and functional medicine was around food, foods sensitivites and digestive issues.

And so, Food sensitivities are related to the spleen and stomach systems, which are paired organs. We say that the stomach rots and ripens the food, Which is actually what happens, right?

That's where it's being broken down so that it can pass into your small intestine. So there are many schools of thought in Chinese medicine, just like there is in medicine.

Just like they are in psychology. You can be a Freudian or a Jungian, cognitive behavior specialist, etc. Or in economics, you know, lots of economic theories.

Same as in TCM. And I am of the school of The Spleen and Stomach. My hero is Li Dongyan. Li dongyan wrote the Pi Wei Lun, or can be translated as the classic of THE SPLEEN AND STOMACH, in around 1249 A. D.

And man, he nailed it. What we call metabolic syndrome, diabetes, heart disease, overweight, et cetera, cholesterol problems. He nailed in 1249. And he came up with profound treatment plans for all of those issues.

that the spleen and stomach are responsible for digestion and turning food into energy. If they're weak, the body won't process foods properly, leading to sensitivities rather than immediate allergic reactions.

An immediate, allergic reaction, like someone eats a peanut and dies, is a different process. Now, poor digestion equals poor energy production. You get bloating, fatigue, diabetes, other blood sugar problems and skin reactions.

Some common TCM treatments for allergies. Herbal medicine is the number one form of medicine in China today. I studied in hospitals where enormous hospitals that were really primarily herbal medicine and some Western medicine, and a little bit of acupuncture.

Acupuncture there was more for anxiety and for musculoskeletal injury, sports medicine, et cetera. Now, acupuncture helps everything. We use it for a lot of different things.

we use a lots of electro acupuncture, which makes it even more powerful, and we can use certain frequency patterns to treat neurological conditions on the brain, etc.

But still, herbal medicine is primary. It is personalized. Herbal formulas are often used to strengthen weak systems, but they can also be used a common control excess systems.

They're very powerful antiviral formulas, very power antibiotic formulas that have been used for 2000 years. There are very, powerful anti-fungal formulas.

In fact, there are over 10,000 well-researched formulas now. Most people are not aware of this, MDs, I find, are usually have no idea. And there are about 10,000 studies published per year on herbal medicine in peer-reviewed journals worldwide.

These are the same journals, these are same researchers that are doing the pharmaceutical research, okay? These PhDs that doing brilliant research. Number three is diet therapy.

There's no perfect diet for everybody. I get asked this question all the time. Now, actually, if I had to in the dark suggest a diet or someone, I would suggest the Mediterranean diet.

It always beats out all of the other diets when they're compared in large scale studies.

TCM Treatments: Herbs, Diet, and Lifestyle

particularly with horrible gut problems and allergenic problems, do better on a carnivore diet for a little while. Some people do it better in a vegetarian diet.

But overall, the diet that works the best for everybody is the Mediterranean diet and you can see why. It's a balanced diet, but in general, we're all different.

We all have different nutritional needs. For example, in children, and menstruating women, I'm constantly trying to get their iron levels up. In men and menopausal women I am constantly, trying get the iron level down because it can cause more heart attacks.

So again, how old are you? What's your gender? Et cetera. What is your genetic background? So everybody has different nutritional needs. Diet therapies generally avoid foods that weaken digestion, like too much cold or too processed food.

And then lifestyle, huge, for Chinese medicine and functional medicine. Lifestyle style habits like sleep. How much sleep are you getting? You need a lot more sleep in the winter than you do in summer.

And in The Wang Bin Ne Jing, it basically said in this summer, go to bed late and get up early. In the winter, go bed early and go up late. Huge difference.

At this time of year, which is spring, it's a pretty even balance as we're getting toward the time year where the yin and yang, the night and day are more balanced.

So some examples of dietary advice now generally recommended again everybody's different you know someone that's pregnant may get completely different advice than an 80 year old man so generally warm cooked foods cooked food are much easier to digest now smoothies are generally okay because the cell walls have been broken down on the vegetables.

If you don't do something to break down the cells walls, it's very, very difficult to get the nutrition out of it. So,

Chinese like warm, cooked foods.

Very easy on-the-gut. For food sensitivities, we like a lot of soups, a lotta cooked vegetables and very specific soup for very-specific issues. Again, cold foods, ice cream, raw foods weaken the digestion.

Avoid excessive dairy and sugar. Eat according to season. And seasonal eating is so critical to health. What you eat in the spring should be very different than what you ate in November and December.

For example, in spring, we should eat a lot of cooked green vegetables. A little raw vegetable there is okay because it's very cleansing. You're not going to get as much food value out of it as if you, say, lightly steam some broccoli for five minutes.

you're going get more food-value out if it than if eat it raw. But the raw, the fiber that's supplied will be cleansing to your digestive system. So spring is the season of the liver.

And after a long winter of eating heavier foods, The liver will need cleansing foods. You've got to clear everything out so the liver can do its job. And then we want to identify trigger foods again.

The goal is to support the body rather than just suppress symptoms. In fact, suppressing symptoms will generally make things worse in the long run. For example, if someone is having histamine reaction, which is just rampant in our country, mast cell activation syndrome, histamines problems which I'm going to do a talk on very soon, are just rampant.

But if you take antihistamins, what antishistamine do is soak You've got cells called mast cells. When they are stimulated, they, in a particular way, break open.

They release histamine into your system. Histamine then travels to the target cells, so you have something in your eye. The histamines will cause your eyes to water and tear up to wash it out.

If you eat something that's causing a problem, then you may have created a lot of mucus trying to wash it out. If you get pollen in your nose, the histamine will activate cells in you nose to release fluids to try to watch out the offending particles.

Okay? Now, if you do an antihistamine, it does not block the release of histamines. It blocks the uptake of histogram. So what happens? The longer you're on an antihistamine, the more histamine builds up in your system.

Histamine is very bad for your systems. It increases dementia risk and a variety of other risks. And that's why it's so hard for people to get off of antishistamines.

Because when they do, suddenly all this built up, backed up histamine is going to affect them. So what we do is we work on the mast cells. We have a variety of formulas and supplements that make the mass cells less likely to break inappropriately.

Now, we want them to do their job. you know, in the mast cells, and so they get broken open too often. So we have things that bind the mass cells which is a very, very safe way, much safer than doing antihistamine.

In comparison to conventional Western medicine, Western is very effective for fast symptom relief. You get pumped up with antihistamines, or maybe you do steroids, you're going to get very quick symptom relief.

I'm not against that. There are times when that can be critical. It can life-saving. However, there is a reaction to that, antahistamine, avoidance of allergens, allergy shots, and antacids if you are having gut problems.

All of those do have their own problems that they cause.

Western Medicine, Functional Medicine, and Histamine Support

In TCM, we treat the root cause. Now that takes a lot of diagnostic. acumen, but we treat the root cause to create long-term balance. And so we prevent allergies from happening by strengthening the body over time.

So that's not as quick as Western medicine. Sometimes I'll have people on antihistamines or even steroids and we'll start the TCM treatment to help them get weaned off of the Western medicines.

We do that with a lot of things, high blood pressure, diabetes, many things we treat side by side. Functional medicine, although in something now, we use a lot of enzymes like DAO, diamine oxidase, for gut histamine.

And so when people have low levels, they have insufficient levels of diamene oxidases in their gut, it's almost like a sponge. They don't soak up the histamines that's been released.

Then if they had any problems with the lining of the gut so that those histamines leak out, then you have allergic reactions. So, DAO can be magical for people.

Functional medicine also has very, very advanced sensitivity and other testing. We do a lot, a LOT of functional medicine testing, leaky gut, small intestinal bacterial overgrowth, Fungal overgrowth, tons and tons of things.

So doing them side by side is fabulous. Strengths and limitations of TCM, it's holistic. That's a strength. It's personalized. Follow the motto that doctors swear to follow, which is first do no harm.

Now limitations, often the results are a little slower. You do need trained practitioners. The diagnostic process, you really shouldn't be doing yourself, because if you just go on ChatGPT or somewhere else and plug in some symptoms, You can get absolutely the wrong treatment principles.

So you do you need a practitioner. It's not a replacement for emergency care. But can we use for somewhat urgent care, right? Someone has a sinus infection that's horrible, then they could go to urgent or they can come to us.

So TCM is very helpful, but it's instant and it should not be considered a replace for an emergency treatment for severe allergies. And remember, the use of functional medicine with TCMs is powerful.

Conclusion and Call to Action

So, I want to thank you and in conclusion, remember TCM and functional medicine focus on creating balance. They focus getting to the root of the problem and they focus you as a unique individual.

And we treat allergies as internal imbalances of either weakness or excess or a combination of both. We combine herbs, acupuncture and diet. It can be used alongside modern medicine and can enhanced with functional medicine testing and supplements.

So thank you very much for watching and or listening and please come back and see me again. In the meantime, be happy, Feeling out of balance? Most approaches just manage symptoms.

Here we get to the root. So real healing, real clarity and balance can begin. Visit alamedaacupuncture.com. That's alamedaacupuncture dot com to learn more, explore our supplements or book a call.

We'd love to hear from you.